

## Agriculture.

### When should Grain be Cut.

A most important question, just at this time, for the Northern farmer. Careful observation, and some little experience during twenty years' residence in a great wheat growing country, has convinced the writer that it is fully ten per cent profit on the crop to the farmer, to cut his wheat before the grain is fully ripe. Our rule is to commence cutting as soon as the earliest part of the crop has passed from the milky into the dough state. There is no occasion to let it lay to cure, when cut while the straw is still partially green. Bind it up as fast as cut, and set the bundles in stooks, "Dutch fashion,"—that is, two and two leaning together, in dozens, or twenties, or any given number, so as to give an even count. Set in this way, the most unripe grain will cure and perfect itself.

The advantages are,—the grain is heavier, sweeter and whiter; there is less loss of shattered grain; the straw, where that is an object, is so much better feed as to make it worth while to cut early, even if there were a loss on the grain, which is not the case.

For seed, the best portion of the field should be set apart and left to mature until fully ripe, and then carefully cut by hand, and very carefully handled, because the very grains which should be saved for seed, are the ones most easily shattered. Give these bundles a slight threshing, and give the grain a thorough winnowing; screen out all but the most plumb kernels, and sow those for your next crop, and you will succeed in improving both quality and product.

This question of "when should grain be cut," has been agitated for many years, both in this country and Europe, and no doubt many a reader will exclaim, "what is the use of writing anything more about that—don't everybody know all about it?" No, sir. You know, perhaps, or what is the same thing to you, you think you do, and won't learn any more, but somebody else will. You forget, or else, in your self-conceited folly, you don't think, that about ten per cent. of all the farmers who ever make any advances in the science of farming, are not to the manor born; do not possess a sort of intuitive knowledge how to do just "as father did," and never do or think of doing anything else.

There is at the present day a vast number of people in this country just beginning to learn farming. Such persons want a constant succession of lessons—even old ones repeated are fresh to them, though they may be stale to you.

This theory of cutting grain, before it is fully ripe, is no new one.

In the 2d volume of British Husbandry, pp. 136, 137, it is said:

The question has been for some time agitated regarding the state of ripeness on which grain should be reaped; and it has been recommended, as a general rule of practice, to cut down the crop before the uppermost grain can be shaken out. Taking all things into consideration, it seems to be the most prudent plan to have the grain cut before it is fully ripe; but in this a medium course should be adopted; for, although grain, if allowed to become too ripe, assumes a dull, husky hue in the sample, yet, if not ripened enough, it shrivels in the drying.

Cadet de Vaux asserts that "Grain reaped eight days before the usual time, has the berries larger, fuller and finer, and better calculated to resist the attacks of the weevil. An equal quantity of the corn thus reaped, with corn reaped at maturity, gave more bread and of a better quality. The proper time for reaping, is that when the grain, on being pressed between the fingers, has a doughy appearance, like a crumb of bread just hot from the oven."

Mr C. Howard, in the Report on Select Farms, says: "Wheat ought never to be allowed to remain uncut till it

is fully ripe. Experiments, easily made, will prove to every cultivator of it, that by permitting it to stand until the straw has lost its succulency, it gains nothing in plumpness or bulk of grain, but loses much in its color and fineness of skin; besides which, he incurs the risk of shelling, by the high wind; or by its being cut under the influence of a burning sun.

When fully ripened by standing in the shocks, no dry hour should be lost in getting it well secured."

London observes, that "in harvesting Wheat, the best farmers, both in England and on the continent, agree that it ought to be cut before it becomes dead ripe. When this is the case, the loss is considerable, both in the field and in the stack-yard; and the grain, according to Von Thaer, produces an inferior flour."

An experienced Pennsylvania farmer of our acquaintance always cuts his oats while the straw is green. This he learned to do, contrary to all old practice of his father and all his neighbors, by accident. His hay crop was short one year, and he determined to cut his oats green; that is, five or six days too soon, as he thought, losing the grain for the sake of the straw. For seed, he left a strip through the middle of the field, where the oats were best. The grain of those cut was just in the dough and milling state, and he expected they would all shivel up. What was his surprise when he came to thrash, to find the early cut straw yielding as much and as plump grain as that which stood till it was dead ripe, while the straw was incomparably better—in fact, the stock ate it as rapidly as they would timothy hay.

### Hay Making—Sweating, &c.

There is said to be philosophy in sucking eggs, and so there is in making hay—in the period of ripeness—protection against dews and rains—manner of curing—and in housing and stacking. Medicinal plants contain the greatest quantity, and in the greatest perfection, all of their peculiar qualities at the period of full blossom, and this we are disposed to believe the best period for cutting grass for hay; for the moment the blossom falls the plant ceases to enlarge, and very soon passes into the "sere and yellow leaf"—the saccharine and mucilaginous portions decompose and evaporate, and soon become the mere woody fibre, like the straw of the cereal grains. Many persons say that timothy should not be cut till the seeds are fully ripe—that it goes further—spends better. It may be true; and the same may be said of bad bread and rancid butter, but it may be doubted whether there is the same quantity of available nutriment contained in any plant—its foliage and stems, after perfecting the seed, as if cut at its greatest vigor. This doctrine will not apply, at any rate, to clover and June grass, as both of these articles are nearly worthless, if left to stand till the seeds are ripe.

All the grasses, and clover most decidedly, make a better quality of hay if cured by the sweating process, rather than by entire sun and air drying. In good hay weather, when the grass is not over stout, what is cut in the forenoon, by being spread out—and where it is light by simply turning it over with the rake—will do to put in the sweating cocks, of about 75 or 100 lbs. size, the same day.

Rake into winnows with the horse rake, or by hand, and make the cocks by flakes or forkfulls, and not by rolling, except in extreme cases of hurry to get it out of the way of showers or night exposure. If made up of small diameter, and as high as they will stand, they may be left for two, three, and even five days, without injury. On a fine sunny morning, as soon as the dew is off, open them freely to the sun, and by 10 o'clock they are ready for loading. Hay cured in this way is infinitely superior to the dried, sun burnt and discoloring process of sun and air drying. While one is the green *Hyson*, the other is *Bohea* or *Souchong*.—*Rural New-Yorker*.